

Council on Postsecondary Education
September 21, 2003

Academic Program Collaboration

Using funds from the Technology Trust Fund and the Kentucky Virtual University Revolving Loan Fund, the Council staff is developing a request for proposals to stimulate collaborative approaches to address state workforce needs and increase the capacity of high demand academic programs. This item outlines the proposal and seeks Council advice.

If Kentucky's postsecondary system substantially increases enrollment by 2015 with limited new resources, institutions must work together to develop new, more efficient ways to deliver academic programs. In addition, if the system is to fulfill its commitments to create a workforce that will support a knowledge-based economy, it must partner with private and public sector organizations to develop the right academic programs with the right content and that are accessible to those who need them. Council staff is developing a request for proposals that will provide incentive funds to encourage postsecondary institutions to address these two challenges. Two types of proposals will be funded from the Technology Trust Fund and the KYVU Revolving Loan Fund. However, preferred proposals would address both the goals outlined in the request.

Collaborating to Meet Workforce Needs

The request will encourage proposals designed to stimulate partnerships among postsecondary institutions, private sector, and public sector organizations to develop or expand academic programs addressing current and projected workforce needs. In the RFP, the Council staff will identify a variety of programs in Kentucky currently providing funding for workforce development initiatives: Workforce Investment Board programs; Kentucky Adult Education programs; Bluegrass State Skills Corporation programs; the Workforce Alliance program which includes the Council, the Cabinet for Workforce Development, the Cabinet for Economic Development, Kentucky Adult Education, and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System; the KCTCS Bridges to Opportunity "Career Pathways" program funded by the Ford Foundation; the KCTCS KY WINS program; and the Office for the New Economy programs to name a few. The staff also has identified a wide range of potential partners with which postsecondary institutions could work to better design and deliver

programs meeting pressing workforce needs (One Stop Centers located throughout the state, for example). Preference will be given to proposals that leverage Council funds with support from these programs and the private sector.

The RFP will define areas of workforce need drawing upon the "Governor's Summit on Quality of Life in the Commonwealth" published by the Office of the New Economy (October 2002), surveys by the Cabinet for Workforce Development, and the results of 10 recent regional Workforce Investment Board meetings assessing current and future workforce needs. Possible areas include:

- Health professions
- Advanced manufacturing
- Information technology
- Biotechnology
- Business entrepreneurship

The Council staff will provide models for the types of innovative programs being sought to guide institutions. For example, the College of Nursing and Health Science at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, has an accelerated nursing program for people with college degrees seeking to make a career change. Drawing from a coalition of nursing organizations, hospital associations, and federal government grants, the program focuses on recruitment of new students as well as addressing work conditions and retention.

While this example is a good one, the Council RFP will encourage multi-institutional partnerships that provide innovative approaches to addressing the capacity problems evidenced at George Mason University through use of distance learning formats and the physical and human resources of partners.

Increasing Academic Program Capacity

The request also will encourage proposals that offer approaches to increasing the capacity of high demand academic programs through nontraditional program delivery. Enrollment increases place enormous pressure on institutions to increase course offerings in important general education areas like composition, mathematics, science, and foreign language. Traditionally this means adding as many additional sections of 25 students as funds allow with adjunct and part-time faculty. New models are available for offering high quality instruction in these high demand areas that allow fewer faculty to teach larger numbers of students. Those studying the role of new information

technologies in delivering education have pointed out that it is in exactly these high demand, high enrollment courses that innovative uses of these technologies make the most educational and economic sense.

For example, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville restructured its Spanish courses making better use of information technology. The results are impressive. It found that students taking Spanish online averaged five grade points greater than students in traditional classrooms, while increasing the number of students served per instructional staff by one-third. Increasing both capacity and test scores is attributed to online continuous assessment and feedback coupled with online tutorials, increased interaction among students, and appropriate use of peer learning assistants. These increases were gained while costs were reduced through the staffing substitutions, reduced space requirements, and shared course management resources.

The RFP will encourage these types of proposals in a variety of high demand areas. The Spanish example is an especially good one. It suggests how the two goals of the Collaborative Academic Program RFP could be integrated in one proposal. Kentucky has a pressing need for Spanish speakers, both to address the needs of our growing Latino population and to take advantage of cultural and business opportunities with Spanish-speaking populations domestically and internationally. The Council staff plans to use the RFP to explicitly encourage a multi-institutional project done in partnership with employers and the Latino community to expand capacity and to increase access to opportunities for developing conversational competency in Spanish.

After review by the Council and its Workforce/Economic Development policy group, the Council staff wishes to issue the RFP in fall 2003. Given available funds, we hope to provide four to five grants or loans not exceeding \$200,000 in late fall 2003 or early fall 2004.